

## \* Smuggling Ring Broken

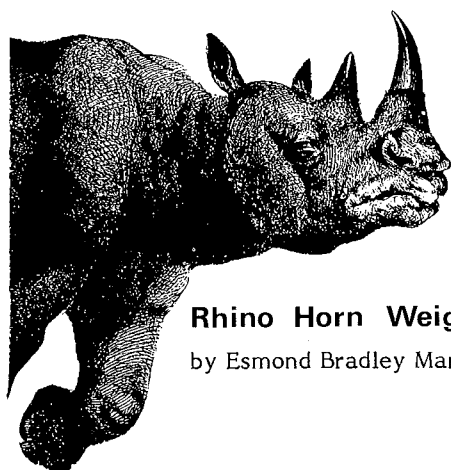
A 2-year investigation by US police has uncovered a \$1 million-a-year smuggling business of bald eagle carcasses and plumage, used to make replicas of Indian artefacts such as fans, whistles, head-dresses, rattles and jewellery. Eighteen other species of birds were also involved in the illegal trade including hawks, owls, songbirds, scissor-tailed flycatchers and anhingas. Agents of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, posing as buyers, arrested 9 people and charged 37 for violating federal laws protecting the bald eagle (the US national emblem) and other endangered species. The laws carry penalties of up to two years in jail and \$20,000 fines.

Over 300 bald eagles have been killed over the last 3 years to supply collectors in Europe, especially West Germany and including Britain, with articles such as war bonnets which fetch as much as \$5000 each and fans for \$800.

This once abundant eagle was virtually exterminated during the 1960s, partly due to the use of DDT and other pesticides. However, since the use of DDT was banned in the US in 1972, populations are increasing although the bald eagle still remains an endangered species. The main threat to the birds' survival is the destruction of habitat, plus the fact that many adults cannot reproduce.

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*The Washington Post* 16.6.83



### Rhino Horn Weights

by Esmond Bradley Martin

The amount of rhino horn available annually on international markets is generally calculated in tonnes. By knowing the average weight of horn carried by a species, conservationists can ascertain how many rhinos are killed to meet the demands of the markets, but samples of horn from all five species of rhinos are not easily obtainable and I am unaware of any report which has compared their average weights. In an attempt to provide some basic information on this subject, I offer the following data which I have gathered from various sources.

While the African white rhino *Ceratotherium simum*, supplies considerably less horn to international markets than the African black *Diceros bicornis*, the white is the species which carries the most horn per animal. From statistics available in southern Africa, this averages 4.0kg. The heaviest single white rhino horn that I have personally handled weighed exactly 10.0kg.

An analysis of the auction records of 6,425 black rhino horns which passed through the Mombasa Ivory Room between 1959 and 1976, shows that the average weight of each was 1.44kg per animal. However, the horn from the black rhino of Zimbabwe appears to be heavier. Of the 228 horns which were sold by the Zimbabwean Department of National Parks from 1963 to 1978 the average pair weighed 3.43kg, approximately twenty per cent more than that of the East African black rhino.

Although over ninety-five per cent of the rhino horn reaching the world market each year is from the two African species, there is some from Asian rhinos as well. The Indian rhino's (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) horn is the heaviest of these. The largest sample of Indian rhino horns I have studied comes from the 441 pieces collected by the Assam State Forest Department from 1965 to 1980, which were eventually all sold. The average weight per horn was 722g, and the largest horn turned the scales at 2.22kg. Although the weight of the horn carried by the Indian rhino is less than one-fifth that of the average white rhino, its value is much greater: US\$6,500 wholesale as compared to US2,200.

The Javan rhino *Rhinoceros sondaicus* is similar in appearance to the Indian rhino and also has just one horn. It can easily be confused with the latter, and in the nineteenth century taxidermists and zoologists frequently misnamed specimen horns of these two species. Still today there are collections of horns from Javan and Indian rhinos in European natural history museums that are improperly identified. Compounding the problem of obtaining a sufficient quantity of Javan horn now to make an estimate of its average weight is the fact that there are perhaps only sixty animals of this species extant. However, Nico van Strien has weighed the five Javan horns in Indonesia's Bogor Museum; and, as one would expect, their average weight of 676g each is very close to that of the Indian horn.

Nico van Strien has also provided me with the weights of the largest sample of horns available from the Sumatran rhino *Didermocerus sumatraensis*. These also are in the Bogor Museum. They number twenty-six and come from thirteen animals that lived on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra. The average pair weighs only 269g; the smaller, rear horn is very tiny, weighing on average only 65g. It is not difficult to differentiate between Javan and Sumatran horns because the former invariably have an obvious groove which runs from near the base of the front of the horn right up to near its tip.

On account of the very much smaller size of Asian rhino horns, smugglers can easily carry them when they move across international borders. The main market for Asian horn is currently Singapore, where it can be legally imported and exported, and where it commands a retail price of US\$19,170 per kg. It is the demand for this horn as a cure for high fever in thousands of traditional medicine shops that has pushed rhinos into their precarious existence today, and it has had a far more disastrous effect on their surviving populations than the loss of much of their former habitat to cultivation.

## Plea to Halt Vicuna Trade

At the CITES Conference in Botswana, a statement made by Bolivia and endorsed by Argentina, Chile and Peru, called upon governments of the UK, Hong Kong and the USA to act immediately to halt the illegal sale of vicuna products which is seriously frustrating efforts to arrest poaching and illegal traffic in the countries where vicuna occur (ie. Bolivia, Peru, Chile and Argentina).

As reported in *Traffic Bulletin* IV(3):27, vicuna cloth has been openly on sale in London and Hong Kong for the past 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years and recently in New York and Washington.

The UK government's reply to Bolivia's request stated that all cloth on open sale in London is from pre-Convention stocks, but threw open an invitation to anyone wishing to purchase the remaining supplies, a detailed record of which is kept by the government.